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Message Text

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44
ACTION EA-09

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 EAE-00 CIAE-00 PM-04 H-02 INR-07 L-03

NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 AID-05

OMB-01 SIL-01 LAB-04 SCCT-01 PC-01 IO-10 OPR-02 SY-05

OC-05 CCO-00 /091 W
---------- 130332
P R 201144Z AUG 75
FM AMEMBASSY BANGKOK
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 0061
INFO COMUSMACTHAI BANGKOK
DIA WASHDC
CINCPAC HONOLULU

C O N F I D E N T I A L BANGKOK 17459

CINCPAC ALSO FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PGOV, PINT, TH
SUBJECT: TRANSFER OF INVESTIGATIVE POWERS FROM THE POLICE

REF: A) BANGKOK 17371 B) BANGKOK A-143 MAY 24, 1974

SUMMARY: THE PROVINCIAL POLICE FORCE HAS THREATENED TO STAGE A NATIONAL STRIKE IF ITS POWERS OVER INVESTIGATIONS ARE TRANSFERRED FROM THE POLICE TO LOCAL OFFICIALS. HIGH POLICE OFFICERS SUPPORT THE PROTESTORS BECAUSE LOSS OF THIS POWER WILL QTE BREAK THEIR RICE BOWLS END QTE BY LESSENING OPPORTUNITIES FOR CORREUPTION. THE EMBASSY BELIEVES THAT POLICE ATTEMPTS TO DEFEAT THE BILL WILL FAIL BECAUSE THE POLICE HAVE LITTLE SUPPORT WITHIN THE GOVERNMENT AND LESS PUBLIC SUPPORT IN THIS INSTANCE. END SUMMARY.

1. PROVINCIAL POLICE HAVE THREATENED TO HOLD A NATIONWIDE STRIKE IF THE PENDING BILL WHICH TRANSFERS
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AUTHORITY TO APPROVE THE INVESTIGATIVE REPORTS FROM

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THEM TO PROVINCIAL GOVERNORS, DISTRICT OFFICERS, AND
ASSISTANT DISTRICT OFFICERS IS NOT WITHDRAWN
BEFORE THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES' SECOND READING.
THE BILL PASSED THE FIRST READING ON JULY 25 BY A 161
TO 3 VOTE. RECENT POLICE DEMONSTRATIONS IN BANGKOK,
INCLUDING THE POLICE RANSACKING OF THE PRIME MINISTER'S
RESIDENCE (REF A) ARE RELATED TO POLICE OPPOSITION TO
THIS PROPOSED LEGISLATION.

2. RANKING POLICE OFFICERS SUPPORT THE POLICE PROTESTORS
BECAUSE THEY STAND TO LOSE A LUCRATIVE SOURCE OF BRIBES
IF THE LEGISLATION PASSES AND THE POLICE HAVE TO SHARE
CRIMINAL INVESTIGATIONS WITH DEPARTMENT OF LOCAL ADMIN-
ISTRATION (DOLA) OFFICIALS. THE POLICE RECOGNIZE THAT
THEY RUN THE RISK OF HAVING TO SHARE THEIR KICKBACKS,
OR WORSE, BEING INVESTIGATED THEMSELVES BY LOCAL
OFFICIALS FOR CORRUPT ACTIVITIES.

3. THE DISPUTE OVER INVESTIGATIVE AUTHORITY IS ONE OF
LONG STANDING. THIS AUTHORITY HAS ALTERNATED BETWEEN
THE LOCAL OFFICIALS AND THE POLICE SINCE 1932. IN GENERAL
ELECTED PARLIAMENTARIANS HAVE BEEN THE MAIN PROPONENTS
OF SHIFTING INVESTIGATIVE AUTHORITY TO DOLA OFFICIALS.
THE NATIONAL LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY CONSIDERED A SIMILAR
BILL IN 1974 (REF B) BUT DEFEATED IT ON SECOND READING
AFTER INTENSIVE POLICE LOBBYING.

4. COMMENT: THE PUBLIC HAS LITTLE RESPECT FOR THE POLICE
IN THAILAND. DURING THE OCTOBER 1973 VIOLENCE MANY
POLICE STATIONS WERE ATTACKED. THE METROPOLITAN POLICE
HEADQUARTERS AND EVERY POLICE BOX IN BANGKOK WERE DESTROYED.
THE THEN DAY-OLD SANYA GOVERNMENT CALMED BANGKOK BY WITHDRAWING
THE POLICE FORCE FROM THE CITY. MOST POLITICIANS AND
CIVILIANS RECOGNIZE THAT CONSIDERABLE REFORM OF THE POLICE
IS NECESSARY. HENCE, THE EMBASSY BELIEVES
THAT THE BILL TO TRANSFER INVESTIGATIVE POWER WILL BE
APPROVED BY THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY DESPITE POLICE OPPOSITION.

5. THE POLICE, RECOGNIZING THE BUILDING PRESSURES FOR
REFORM, ARE TRYING VARIOUS MANEUVERS TO PROTECT THEIR
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BUREAUCRATIC POSITIONS; HENCE, THE PROTEST DEMONSTRATIONS
AGAINST THE TRANSFER OF INVESTIGATIVE POWERS. THE RANSACKING
OF THE PRIME MINISTER'S RESIDENCE, HOWEVER, MAY NOT
HAVE HELPED THE CAUSE MUCH. NEVERTHELESS, INSTITUTING
REFORM AND BRINGING THE POLICE FORCE UNDER THE CONTROL
OF THE GOVERNMENT WILL TAX PRIME MINISTER KHUKRIT'S
POLITICAL ACUMEN IN FUTURE MONTHS. INDEED THE POLICE
HAVE DEMONSTRATED THAT THEY CAN HOLD THE COUNTRY HOSTAGE

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AND KHUKRIT MAY BE PERSUADED TO SET THE LEGISLATION ASIDE.
WHITEHOUSE

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